Chabad at UT Sponsors AIPAC Shabbat

In early December, students and community members learned about current events in Israel and the Middle East from Elias Saratovsky, Southwest regional director for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, at AIPAC Shabbat at Chabad.

The special event was geared toward engaging Jewish Longhorns and increasing pro-Israel activity on campus.

Melding Judaism and Israel activism into one meaningful and enlightening evening, AIPAC Shabbat marked a milestone in Chabad's growing relationship with the organization.

The Chabad Student Center at UT's Rabbi Zev Johnson said, "We were blessed to have Dr. Kaylen and Carol Silverberg invite my wife and me as well as a group of students to join them at the 2011 AIPAC Austin Annual Event [in October]."

"Following the event, students expressed interest in continuing the Chabad/AIPAC relationship, leading to the development of the first annual AIPAC Shabbat."

Scott Kammerman, Director of Networking and Emerging Leadership at Jewish Federation of Greater Houston, organized and sponsored the event.

"AIPAC Shabbat showed another facet and emphasized the importance of the Chabad Student Center at UT's interest and obligation in supporting Israel," Johnson said.

"This year we have been able to increase our programming efforts in regards to Israel advocacy. We were fortunate enough to have the program director of Israel National News speak to the students earlier this year, and now with such a strong turnout of over 120 students and lay leaders, it has proven to us how important our efforts need to be in the area of programming."

Johnson's explained that unwavering dedication and commitment to Israel is something that he hopes to impart to students.

"Israel always needs our support, especially in today's chaotic world," he said.

"Unfortunately the tide of apathy is greatly affecting our campuses nationwide while the propaganda against Israel is increasing at an alarming rate."

Saratovsky explained the importance of student activism and the significance of educating future leaders. He complimented Texans for Israel, UT's pro-Israel student organization, and encouraged students to get involved.

Sophomore Caroline Mendelsohn, vice president of campus engagement for Texans for Israel, spoke to students about opportunities for involvement and the plethora of pro-Israel activities on campus available through the organization.

The evening marked an additional transition for Chabad as Michelle Arbov, president of the Student Executive Board, graduated this semester.

Ariela Johnson gave a tribute to Arbov's leadership and influential role in shaping and developing the Chabad Student Center.

Incoming president Julie Johnson spoke in turn, attributing her involvement and appreciation for Chabad to Arbov's influence.

Finally, Arbov thanked the Johnsons and Chabad for shaping her years at UT. She highlighted the critical nature of the students' role in continuing to grow the Student Center and advancing the successful student leadership it embodies.

Chabad is a natural hub for pro-Israel activity. As an organization dedicated to nurturing the Jewish neshama, AIPAC Shabbat fits with its ideals.

AIPAC's dedication to the State of Israel aligns with Chabad's values, fostering infinite potential in a relationship between the two. The Johnsons have developed promotion of student activism and the energy and motivation of student leadership foreshadow much to look forward to in the future.

Rabbi Zev Johnson and Sam Glazer at the 2011 AIPAC Austin Annual Event.

For additional information about UT Chabad programs, leadership and events, please visit www.jewishlonghorns.com

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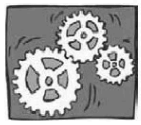

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